



LABELS



FOUNDATION

Think differently about disabilities.

2018 COMMUNITY REPORT

CONSIDER LABELS IN A NEW LIGHT.

LEADER	ADVOCATE
FRIEND	NEIGHBOR
ATHLETE	PERFORMER
ARTIST	EXPLORER
COWORKER	CHAMPION

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING LABELS:

We invite you to affix these labels to the various images throughout the report. There are ten labels and eight images with a designated "I am..." space reserved for a single label. Feel free to use the remaining two labels anywhere that inspires you.

By opening our minds to new labels and eliminating outdated negative labels from our vocabularies, we are contributing to a shift in perceptions that will ultimately become our natural way of thinking.



Individuals with varying abilities were employed to help assemble this report.



As we end another fiscal year and mark our 10-year anniversary, AWS Foundation challenges you to consider how you see the abilities of each member of our community. Whether consciously or not, we all use labels. Our words can be encouraging and inclusive or hurtful and alienating. Since 2007, AWS Foundation has strived to build a more inclusive Northeast Indiana for people of all abilities.

To that end, agencies have been supported, programs initiated and buildings funded. But your words have the ability to topple the best of efforts.

Take a minute to consider the words you use. "Slow" and "handicapped" are outdated, negative labels. As you flip through the pages of this report, consider what new labels you can use that acknowledge ability and contribution. Open your mind and imagine a future filled with potential for each of the faces you see. The almost \$20 million in grants over the last ten years have helped paint a picture of promise and inclusion.

Join us in our mission to change labels, build an inclusive, welcoming community, and *think differently about disabilities*.


Patti Hays
CEO, AWS Foundation



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Back Row (left to right)

Dick Teets, Dan Skekloff, Todd Jacobs, Don Steining, Joe Doust, Mike Cahill, Robert Stone, Tim Dirig

Front Row (left to right)

Chris Cathcart, Sherri Miller, Tom O'Neill, Tracie Martin, Larry Adelman

A SINGULAR FOCUS.

IMMEASURABLE IMPACT.

CELEBRATING 10 GROUNDBREAKING YEARS.

The desire to create an inclusive community is built into the DNA of AWS Foundation. It's what we've endeavored to achieve since our founding and what we measure our efforts against each year.

It's at this moment, our 10-year mark, that we pause to ask ourselves, "Have we moved closer to fulfilling our mission and our vision?" From building a dynamic network of support to making programs and resources readily available to more people in more places, AWS Foundation's funding has promoted greater diversity, allowing our community, our schools and our workforce to change and grow in ways we only imagined a decade ago. Through our singular focus on disabilities, we're able to assist our grantees in creating new and innovative programming.

Prior to AWS Foundation's formation in 2007, great strides were being made toward inclusion, but we saw room for improvement. We took a bold step into the lives of individuals with disabilities and their


families through strategic funding. Since then, the funding landscape has been reframed, extending to organizations that promote diversity and create opportunities for all members of the community.

To support these visionary partners, our annual funding levels have dramatically increased from \$299,248 in our first year of grantmaking to \$4,692,062 today.

Opportunities for academic pursuits, competitive employment and social and cultural enrichment are expanding every year. While there is still work to be done, many diverse recreational resources in our region are no longer off limits— they're more accessible and welcoming, equipped with additional adaptive amenities and a network of volunteer support.

By challenging ourselves through our funding and extending the support of the Foundation deeper within the community, we have a better chance of impacting lasting change.



A close-up photograph of two Black women smiling warmly. The woman on the left has her hair in a bun and wears pink-rimmed sunglasses on her head. The woman on the right wears a blue baseball cap and a pink t-shirt with 'WRC' visible. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor event. A white text box is overlaid on the left side of the image.

“UTILIZING OUR ASSETS AND OUR CREATIVE APPROACH, WE HAVE OPENED DOORS TO THOSE WHO MIGHT OTHERWISE NOT HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE A DYNAMIC AND POTENTIAL-FILLED WORLD.”

I AM...

Inaugural board chair Ben Eisbart sums up our 10-year trajectory: "Utilizing our assets and our creative approach, we have opened doors to those who might otherwise not have had the opportunity to experience a dynamic world."

The bar we've set for ourselves is a challenge to our partnering organizations and the community. "An exciting piece of what we do in grantmaking," explains board chair Tom O'Neill, "is how we interact with providers and advocacy groups, often challenging them to introduce new opportunities for people with and without disabilities." There is a very positive outcome when those conversations happen. "When people without disabilities get the chance to interact with people with disabilities, they discover they're more alike than different—with the same aspirations, needs and desires."

AWS Foundation's grantmaking enhances organizations' intent on thinking differently about disability. Not only do we celebrate their trailblazing successes but also the small, incremental wins that propel an undercurrent of change. These countless positive outcomes, big and small, inspire us to pursue our purpose for another 10 history-making years.



10-YEAR CELEBRATION ACTIVITIES

As part of our 10th Anniversary milestone, we hosted several special activities inviting the community to take part in and celebrate the great strides toward inclusiveness.



designed by 10 local artists were introduced to area playgrounds to help teach the importance of friendship and inclusion at an early age.



6 POPULAR DESTINATIONS

- WAR MEMORIAL COLISEUM
- EMBASSY THEATRE
- GRAND WAYNE CENTER
- ARTS UNITED
- PARKVIEW FIELD
- SWEET BREEZE CANAL BOAT

now offer Sensory Friendly Kits, making outings more enjoyable and possible for families.



\$44,728 IN FUNDING #GIVING TUESDAY

was matched by AWS Foundation as 11 disability service providers were invited to participate in Giving Tuesday, a campaign to promote philanthropy.

6,000

NEW SETS OF EYES

were directed to awsfoundation.org as we gave \$19,000 in prize money during our first online scavenger hunt for messages supporting inclusiveness to raise awareness around the abundance of resources in our area.



GLOBAL INFLUENCER

was our esteemed guest at a very special IPFW (now PFW) Omnibus Lecture. Retired astronaut Captain Mark Kelly shared the inspiring story of his wife's, former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, optimism in the face of a brain injury as a result of an assassination attempt.



1,000+ INDIVIDUALS

many of whom experienced their very first baseball game, joined us free of charge at our annual TinCaps Disability Day at Parkview Field.



INFLUENCE + ADVOCATE

ENLIGHTENING AN ENTIRE COMMUNITY.

Over the course of our first ten years, AWS Foundation has played a significant role as an advocate for the disability community. The disability world is constantly evolving. Our role in fostering dialogue is critical to advancing not only our mission, but opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

With plans for the 10th Annual disAbilities Expo underway, this is an opportune time to reflect on how powerful our support network has become. As host and sponsor of the event for nearly a decade, we're excited to continue our role in the empowerment of a whole community of people with disabilities.

A longtime provider of free legal help for low-income individuals, Volunteer Lawyer Program (VLP) advocates for the disability community by offering legal guardianship services at no cost. Foundation funding helps VLP fulfill an urgent need in the community, ensuring the rights and needs of individuals with disabilities are met and maintained.



VLP volunteers advocate for individuals with disabilities during a guardianship hearing.


Additional Foundation funding is helping support a collaboration between VLP and Mental Health America in Northeast Indiana (MHA). The VLP provides legal processing and recruits volunteer

attorneys who represent the client and incapacitated individuals being served by MHA as part of the Advocates for Seniors and Incapacitated Adults (VASIA) program. More volunteer attorneys mean more help protecting and empowering our most in-need population.



Kids on the Block™ puppets deliver messages of inclusiveness to 3rd graders.

Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana hosts another program aimed at reframing the narrative around disabilities at elementary schools. Kids on the Block™ is a traveling puppet show that introduces real-world topics like bullying and building friendships to 3rd graders throughout Allen County. Intervention at a young age is important to establish positive attitudes towards diversity— if acceptance is learned early, there's no need to push the reset button. Inclusion wins.

A woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a red and black patterned dress, is the central focus. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a blurred crowd of people, suggesting a social gathering or event. The lighting is warm and indoor.

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I AM...

ENGAGE + THRIVE

ENHANCING LIVES THROUGH RICH EXPERIENCES.

Since AWS Foundation's beginning, we have supported organizations that work to create opportunities and experiences that enhance the lives of individuals with a disability. Thanks to the efforts of the many dynamic Northeast Indiana organizations we've partnered with over the last decade, opportunities for meaningful, inclusive social enrichment are more prevalent than ever.



What began as a modest grant to help pave the Bi-County Services' parking lot in Bluffton evolved into an accessible playground across from the all-inclusive Dream Team T-Ball field. Accepting a Foundation challenge to lead the community in raising funds for

Whicker Park Inclusive Playground, Bi-County Services has delivered an innovative outdoor space that instills acceptance, diversity and respect.

In response to agencies looking for new and unique activities for their clients, Volunteer Services of Allen County is working to make opportunities available to the disability community through their RSVP-I CAN program.


Beginning with a small Mighty Money grant to pilot the I CAN idea, it has grown from two community-based projects to 25 unique projects involving 600 volunteers from the disability community. Participants not only engage with the community in new ways—they learn the value of giving back. I CAN helps to establish inclusiveness

by creating socialization opportunities that lead to a feeling of being more connected. "As for changes in the community," boasts executive director Ani Etter, "we see more tolerance and understanding that we're all different but our needs are very much the same."



I CAN volunteers plant milkweed at Eagle Marsh.



A young girl with brown hair, wearing a light blue hoodie and a white tank top with 'SPORT' printed on it, is sitting on a swing at a playground. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a colorful playground with red and blue structures.

“WE SEE MORE
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I AM...



Long recognized for its summer programs for campers of all abilities, Camp Red Cedar is putting a Foundation grant to good use by providing “camperships” to exceptional youth who don’t qualify for Medicaid funding.

This experience allows all campers to learn the wonderful ways we’re different and not-so-different at the same time.



From its planning phase, Riverfront Fort Wayne has had a vision of inclusiveness that AWS Foundation helped facilitate through the hosting of focus groups to gather input from the disability community. With a goal of exceeding ADA compliance with features like wheelchair accessible greenways and the all-accessible Sweet Breeze canal boat, Riverfront is creating opportunities for the community to feel more connected and for families to face fewer barriers

while recreating together. Riverfront is setting an example of how vital it is to keep a network-wide conversation going on the topic of inclusion and diversity.

As Riverfront puts it, “Our community can only be great if all are involved, and that very much includes the disability community.”





COMPETE + PERFORM

TURNING ORDINARY INTO EXTRAORDINARY.

In stark contrast to ten and twenty years ago, today serious athletes with disabilities compete and showcase their talents far and wide. AWS Foundation celebrates competitive and noncompetitive athletes of all abilities in attaining their personal goals and participating in their sport of choice.

The Foundation's grantmaking has leveled the playing field for athletes of all abilities. Through funding for operations and adaptive equipment for Turnstone's sports programs, its athletes have achieved world-class status and elevated Turnstone to a U.S. Paralympic Training Site.



Thanks to the growing popularity of the Whitley County Dazzlers, area high school and college sports fans get to experience the special brand of spirit that an inclusive cheerleading squad delivers. With three national titles to their name, the Dazzlers operate thanks to strong

community support and a Mighty Money grant. Established in 2011 at their home base, the Whitley County YMCA, the Dazzlers are one of many adaptive service programs at

YMCAs throughout the region that have received Foundation support. Their head coach marvels at the students' ability to problem-solve and create their own sense of community. "Never once have they said 'I can't.' They just go with the flow."

Today, we look beyond traditional recreation programs to innovative options like Glorious Gate's adaptive rowing program and the Curling Club's special needs leagues, which multiply the choices for new challenges and experiences.



Glorious Gate Rowing Association provides adaptive programs that encourage individuals with disabilities to participate in rowing programs.



Since 2015, the Foundation has provided grants for curling instruction and league play for athletes with disabilities at the Fort Wayne Curling Club.

“NEVER ONCE
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THEY JUST GO
WITH THE FLOW.”



I AM...

INSPIRE + DELIGHT

SPARKING CREATIVITY AND SELF-EXPRESSION.

Through an ongoing dialogue with AWS Foundation around increasing accessibility to the performing arts, more and more organizations are introducing adaptive programming that opens doors to participation and personal skill-building.

Project Lights Up! at Fort Wayne Civic Theatre enables entire families to enjoy the rich, live theatre experience in a sensory-friendly environment. The Foundation sponsors three modified performances each season, allowing families to attend at no cost. The program makes thoughtful modifications—like toned-down special effects and a sensory-friendly area featuring Peyton the therapy dog—to accommodate caregivers and families so the experience is a positive one for all.



Guests meet the Cinderella cast after a *Project Lights Up!* performance.

“WE PROVIDE A
SUPPORT SYSTEM
THAT CREATES
BRIDGES BETWEEN
WHAT THEY LEARN
IN OUR PROGRAM
AND WHAT THEY
APPLY IN THE
REAL WORLD.”



I AM...



I AM...

The Jesters at the University of Saint Francis offer a similar experience, but from the perspective of being onstage. The multimedia performance troupe has grown from 37 to nearly 100 participants today. Joining the effort in 2010, the Foundation's support is helping expand their programming and annual theatre production.

In addition to developing skill-building and nurturing artistic ability, the Jesters encourage and empower participants to carry their individual voices out into the community. As program director Allison Ballard explains, "We provide a support system that creates bridges between what they learn in our program and what they apply in the real world."



PREPARE + EMPOWER

REDEFINING ROADMAPS TO SUCCESS.

Today more than ever, young people are expected to be high achievers in all they do. With the bar raised to such great heights, AWS Foundation is continually thinking of innovative ways to support educators.

With progressive work readiness programs on our radar since the beginning, we were prepared to help Junior Achievement realize the opportunity to provide valuable job training to young

people with disabilities. Through modifications to JA Biztown®, students are provided with pre-vocational training and challenged to take on managerial roles. As more companies learn the advantages of hiring an inclusive workforce, the demand will grow for candidates with a broader skillset.



Greater Fort Wayne Inc. promotes workplace inclusiveness through their Leadership Fort Wayne program, which the Foundation supports by sponsoring two scholarship seats for individuals with disabilities. "I plan to keep discovering where the gaps are and be vocal about coming up with plans to bridge them," says recent graduate and scholarship recipient Kevin Showalter. According to Greater Fort Wayne Inc., "When you connect people with diverse experiences, our community is better positioned for progress."

In an effort to help disability service providers offer greater independence for their clients, McMillen Health launched "Body Talk." Foundation funding has helped the interactive health and personal hygiene series grow to become the


widely-popular Varied Abilities Days, designed to help children and adults develop good habits leading to better quality of life.

High School Transition Fairs offer a supportive pathway to independent living. Organized and initiated by AWS Foundation, fairs help parents, educators and students tap the right resources and opportunities for successful next steps following graduation.

AWS Foundation's investment in expanded employment and training programs must include transportation. Supporting Community Transportation Network (CTN) bridges the gap in specialized transportation services with door-through-door service to more workplaces. With the right resources in place, the possibilities are endless for our next generation of thinkers, doers and leaders.



Students learn important health skills at Varied Abilities Days.



“WHEN YOU
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I AM...

10-YEAR GRANT

AMOUNTS AWARDED

Our financial contribution has expanded steadily and vigorously with each new year, and we are proud to report a grant total of over \$19.5M in our 10th Anniversary year.

2008: Start-up Activities

2009: \$ 299,248 16 Grants

2010: \$ 429,224 21 Grants

2011: \$ 835,758 34 Grants

2012: \$ 797,001 34 Grants

2013: \$ 792,054 52 Grants

2014: \$ 1,919,516 65 Grants

2015: \$ 2,821,313 68 Grants

2016: \$ 3,607,707 96 Grants

2017: \$ 3,290,727 84 Grants

2018: \$ 4,692,062 74 Grants

Ten-Year Total Grant Amount:

\$19,547,610

2017-2018

HOUSING

\$ 416,000

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

\$1,947,650

DIRECT SERVICES

\$485,544

FINANCIAL IMPACT

TRANSPORTATION

\$ 238,514

EARLY DIAGNOSIS & SYSTEM NAVIGATION

\$ 509,465

SOCIAL ENRICHMENT

\$ 963,789

OTHER \$ 131,100

2017-2018 GRANTEES

Achieva Resources Corporation
 Adams Central Elementary School
 Adams Wells Special Services
 Audiences Unlimited
 Autism Society of Indiana
 Bi-County Services
 Blue Jacket
 Boys and Girls Club
 Cahoots Coffee Café
 Camp Millhouse
 Camp PossAbility
 Camp Red Cedar
 Canine Companions
 Carey Services
 Caring About People
 CASS Housing
 Children's Autism Center
 Children's Choir
 of Huntington County
 Churubusco Elementary School
 Coesse Elementary School
 Community Transportation Network
 DeKalb Central School
 Alumni Foundation
 Down Syndrome Association
 of Northeast Indiana
 Easterseals Arc of Northeast Indiana
 Family Voices Indiana
 Fort Wayne Civic Theatre
 Fort Wayne Curling Club
 Fort Wayne Dance Collective
 GiGi's Playhouse
 GiveHear
 Greater Fort Wayne Inc.
 Healthier Moms and Babies
 Heartland Sings
 Huntington University
 Indiana Legal Services
 IPFW
 Joe's Kids Inc
 Junior Achievement
 of Northeast Indiana
 Lutheran Social Services of Indiana
 Mental Health America
 Middle Waves Music Festival
 Mustard Seed Furniture Bank
 Neighborlink
 Northeast Indiana Cadre
 of Transition Leaders
 Park Center
 Pathfinder Services
 RSVP of Allen County
 SCAN
 Scherer Resources
 Science Central
 Southwest Allen County Schools
 Special Olympics Indiana
 The Arc of Indiana Foundation
 The Honeywell Foundation
 The League
 The Magical Meadows
 Trine University
 Turnstone
 University of Saint Francis
 Visiting Nurse
 Volunteer Lawyer Program
 Wellspring
 Whitko Community Schools
 Whitko Community High School
 World Baseball Academy
 YMCA of Greater Fort Wayne

COMING SOON

Discover, connect and stay informed with **FINDER**, a free online portal offering access to a comprehensive support and information network designed to empower the disability community.



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Fort Wayne, IN 46809

AWSFOUNDATION.ORG